INTERVIEW I

DATE: December 15, 1989

INTERVIEWEE: JOHN HENRY FAULK

INTERVIEWER: Michael L. Gillette

PLACE: Mr. Faulk's residence, Austin, Texas

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F: I was thinking the first time he [Lyndon Johnson] came over my horizon was in 1938. He had just assumed the congressional seat from whatever the man's name was that died.

G: [James] Buchanan.

F: Buchanan. And the way he came to my attention was that we had living with us out here--I lived out in South Austin out at a place which is now called Green Pastures; at that time it was just the old Faulk home--we had living with us a wonderful old couple, Mr. and Mrs. John Talley [?], who were both Methodists in our church. They were not on hard times, but relatively hard times, and they needed family. So Mama moved them in with us. It was a huge house.

Mr. Talley was an utter delight. He had been an old trail driver back in the seventies and he had a fantastic photographic memory. "I remember in 1873, in April that year came a terrible gully-washing rain. We were bringing cattle in. We were rounding cattle up around Lockhart, Texas. Everything was flooded." He could remember details like that. Then he'd put the herds together and they'd take them up the trail. I could just sit and listen to him by the hour. I was at The University of Texas.

He was a great favorite in the old set in Austin, the old politicos. He had a job that the county commissioners had given him. He was elevator man for the--just as a courtesy kind of thing 'cause it was something he could do. He was very old. He was eighty-odd years old then. He had a little white goatee and snowy white hair and always dressed just as neat--he was always very precise in his clothes.

But he came one day just absolutely beaming with joy. He had heard from the best friend he ever had in the world, Lyndon Johnson. Well, it turned out that Lyndon was not the best friend he ever had in the world but Lyndon's father had been. Lyndon had written him a letter thanking him for congratulating him for becoming--

G: A member of Congress.

F: --a congressman. He said, "I've heard Daddy speak of you many times. He held you in great regard and valued your counsel and I hope I have the benefit of it." Well, no one of consequence had ever said this to Mr. Talley in a long, long time. Just absolutely--it was a perfectly written letter. And so I decided Lyndon must be a pretty decent guy to take the time to write an old gentleman like this. So he became a fervent Lyndon Johnson man. Then I got to hearing about Lyndon and his alliance with Roosevelt and that charmed me. I hadn't known Buchanan. I hadn't been interested in that area of politics much.

Well, that is my introduction to Lyndon. It was a very pleasant one because I thought it was a terribly gracious thing, and I loved Mr. Talley very dearly and valued him very greatly because he was a walking history book. Lyndon played to that part of him. And I began to follow Lyndon's career. I wasn't into the local politics at all, that is, the ins and outs and maneuverings or anything. But I was impressed by Lyndon's

pro-Roosevelt position because I was a very ardent supporter of the New Deal. I thought it was a terribly exciting time.

Of course Pappy [W. Lee] O'Daniel had become the political salvation of Texas. He had run for governor that year; beat Bill McGraw and Ernest Thompson, both who had been grooming for years for the job. He just wiped them out with this, "Let's kick out the professional politicians and let's become our own bosses again"--that claptrap and nonsense he talked. And I came to dislike Pappy O'Daniel and his fraudulent approach, his synthetic qualities, and saw in Lyndon a different quality, kind of the solid Democratic position. So that endeared him more.

Then of course the war came along, and it was along in the early forties that Lyndon got involved in a radio station down here--Mrs. Johnson did.

G: Where were you at this point in your life?

F: I was doing graduate work at The University of Texas and had gotten my bachelor's and my master's degree, and was a tutor at the university and was into folklore. I was very much under the influence of J. Frank Dobie and Roy Bedichek, who was a great Texas naturalist. Dobie and Bedichek and a wonderful man named Mody Boatwright, who was a professor of English at the university at the time, and Dr. Walter Webb, who was a historian, had kind of a set that went around. We'd go out either to Dobie's ranch or some convenient place and go swimming and eat supper and talk. I had become very much of a Dobie afixionada [aficionado] and he was very fond of me. He was very kind to me and very encouraging, but very direct and very naked-fisted. They all of them had a respect and affection for Lyndon Johnson.

G: Why do you think that was?

F: Well, because he seemed like he was a man of the earth and a man on their side on issues; it was kind of hard to find a congressman who was, in Texas. Most of them were pretty much corporation men, did corporate things. And Lyndon had a certain independence about him, or reflected a certain independence that caught them. Congressman Johnson, I always felt, deliberately passed himself off as a liberal, a mildly liberal--not very liberal. He was obviously a master politician because he reflected the liberal attitude to liberals in Texas. And of course a liberal in Texas was somebody that didn't think that Pappy O'Daniel was a saint.

But during the early forties I was off collecting folklore for the Library of Congress and very much occupied with academic affairs. But I had become very interested in racism. I despised Hitler; absolutely despised him with a shaking passion, as did Dobie.

Dobie and I had been developing along the same line almost simultaneously. When I originally knew Dobie back in the early thirties he was apolitical, or if anything kind of reactionary; opposed to Roosevelt and his soft-headed practices, "nourishin' a bunch of niggers and Meskins," as Dobie would put it, "just breeding up more of them." And so there was something--[he would] wonder whether that was part of the state's business, to look after them, and that he was turning us into a whole nation of zeros.

I would argue with Dobie and in the process of arguing with him, he began to read a lot of the material that ol' Bedichek and I would give him. Bedichek was a very liberal, very literate man that was well read and very conversant with politics. And as I say, both of them were very fond of Lyndon Johnson. They held him in great respect.

They didn't hold politicians in very great respect. They had their suspicions and limitations about them.

Dobie was fond of saying about the meetings of Congress, "The buzzards are gatherin' at the roost. They'll be pickin' around on the carcasses." He was a rather colorful speaker.

G: What changed his mind on race relations?

F: Well, there was a very right-wing member of our faculty named Jules Eugenié Bernard from New Haven, from Yale, a Ph.D.; taught at the university. And he and I were friends. He played Bach beautifully on his violin. I had met him through other people, but Dobie couldn't stand him, didn't think he had any business at The University of Texas. He was so contemptuous of Texas. The man just couldn't stand it. It was a barbaric state populated principally by barbarians. Its pretensions at a university were pretty absurd and--but it turned out he was a pro-Nazi. I couldn't imagine anybody being pro-Nazi. I just despised Hitler. I despised the arrogance of the Germans.

You have to be back in that period to understand what had been building up in this country. There were a great many people in this country that were pro-Hitler. There was a strong element of them, and there's a number of German communities, and there were German bunds, that were kind of singing societies and cheerers-on of Hitler. Dobie hated Germans because a German had imported the Ph.D. to the United States. And so he--

G: He opposed the Ph.D.--?

F: The Ph.D., the whole system. He said it was the damnation of higher education in the United States, simply a systematized method of moving dry bones from one graveyard to

another. It had nothing to do with broadening the mind and enriching the human spirit. He had fought in World War I and he was suspicious of the Germans. He had no use for them.

Well, this fellow Jules Bernard jumped me one day and said Dobie and I turned his stomach; said we were talking about racism in Germany, that they're prejudiced against the Jews, [but that] their openly and avowed anti-Semitic doctrines were nothing more than a reflection of the Texas law. They had just taken the Texas law and--we had Jim Crow laws here, where blacks had to sit in certain places, drink from certain fountains, go to certain public facilities, and were rigidly segregated. He said, "Well, the Jew isn't conveniently colored like your black people are so we have to make them wear arm bands. Same thing; we got it all from you."

Well, ol' Dobie and I started talking about that, and Bedichek. And I said, "You know, that son of a gun is right. We are pretty hypocritical." Dobie reflected and we discussed and he became of the same opinion, and we became big anti-racists. Because I was working with blacks and collecting black folklore, and discovered--I was born and raised in South Austin, grew up in Texas, lived in a segregated society all my life. I never had questioned it. But all of the intellectual development that was going on with me at that time came to focus.

G: But your father had had a lot of--

F: Yes. My father had had a very enlightened attitude; now I realize, almost a revolutionary attitude, because he had been raised a sharecropper.

G: How do you account for that, for his enlightened attitude?

F: I don't know. It is something that I inherited too, I mean a way of looking at life that was done with a degree of honesty. And when one is honest you have to say, "Of course blacks are individuals and they are citizens of the land and the accident of color isn't"--you have to cut away a whole lot of verbiage and garbage but you come out with--and then you get incensed. You say, "My God, this is outrageous, what we have done, what we've practiced twenty-four hours a day against these people."

G: Did your father ever explain to you why he felt as he did, though? Was there any event or anything in his own--?

F: Yes. He had a number of times--oh, yes. You see, we'd go milk the cows in the morning. He would go out with me to milk in the morning and that's when he'd have his long talks with me, endless--kind of speeches I suppose they were, of explaining attitudes that he had. For instance, talking about the race problem, he says, "The black will only have segregation--where they live as second-class citizens--only as long as he allows our foot to remain on his neck. If he decides he doesn't want it there any more, it's going to be the end of things. He's not going to put up with it any more. It's not going to be us that stops it. I wish it were, but it's not going to be. He's going to call a halt to this."

So I was always inclined to believe that, because Daddy always took cases that were hopeless, of blacks, that he never got paid for. He'd become very emotionally involved in them, and he was the administrator of God knows how many near-worthless estates for blacks; that is, he was the trustee for the young blacks. So we had a lot of them around the house when I was growing up.

So he had evolved over the years. He was a very dedicated Christian. I mean, he was very dedicated. He didn't believe in the divinity of Jesus; he believed in the truth of

Jesus. He thought Jesus was a brilliant, brilliant, prophetic rabbi who could see down through the ages. As he would say, "He can see down through the ages the follies of man." He thought Jesus had perhaps achieved the highest level any human could when he said, "Forgive them. They know not what they do." So he passed this on to me. This was part of my growing-up experience, hearing this. So I'd always had a tolerant attitude.

And Dobie had been raised a Methodist in South Texas. He'd only known Mexicans, *vaqueros*, and he was a great folklorist. He and I had shared in common this experience of listening to the people and realizing there was something terribly important being said in their songs and in their folk sayin' and in their folk stories.

And I found that I could get an eager and willing audience by doing those stories. So when I was doing my graduate work and teaching there at the university I was quite a man on the campus. I mean I had won a lot of applause and good will for what I'd done because, you see, the black was a "Negro" or a "Nigra" at best. At that time none were allowed on The University of Texas campus without a package in their hand, literally, as terrible as that sounds, it happens to have been a fact.

Dobie and I and the folklore society, I think of 1943 or 1942--it was 1942, because I was gone in 1943--Dobie and I were both champing at the bit to go fight Hitler. He was too old and I was one-eyed and couldn't get in. We were constantly flexing our muscles and shaking our fists at Hitler and all Hitler stood for. And we made a transition from well-intentioned southerners and rather bumbling southerners really, relatively enlightened, to pretty keen observers of what was going on.

The more I worked with blacks the more I realized the deep anger, the great hurt that was there. Until you've stood up in front of a whole church full of black people that

don't even know what the war is about--all the illiterate [sic], none with radios--to talk about the war: "How many of you know where Germany is?" One or two hands go up. "Do you know we're at war with Germany?" "We heered about that." "Do you know which way Germany is from here?" "It seem like t'me like it's over yonder direction 'cross the cotton patch, ain't it? I know--yonder way, I think." They don't like to be completely--and then you realize, my God, these are people that don't know what's happening in their world, and the army is coming to pick up their sons, the draft is. They won't even know where they've gone or why they've gone, whose war it is.

All these things impressed the hell of out of me and Dobie too. So we became pretty active. We came to include in all of our speeches--and we were very popular speakers, both of us--a few words about what we've got to do about our black population. You see, they couldn't vote at that time in Texas in the Democratic primaries. They couldn't participate. And of course there was the poll tax as well as the bar in the Democratic primaries; any black participating had to pay a poll tax the year before.

Well, the thing is that it seemed to me that Congressman Johnson always took the right position on those matters; certainly old Senator Tom Connally didn't. He was very sweet and would always write me letters saying, "Yes, I remember your daddy in law school," and that sort of thing, but he never took a position on the anti-lynch law. That was a big law that we were after, get an anti-lynch law through so the federal government can stop this; step into Mississippi and Georgia and stop these lynchings that's going on. It was a terrible, wicked weapon with which to terrorize the blacks into submission, the lynching was.

And all the ferment of the Democratic Roosevelt days, and the war coming on and concentrating on attacking Hitler and Hirohito of Japan. Of course the Soviet Union came in on the side of the Allies. Hitler turned on Russia in June of 1941. Well, both Dobie and I would discuss this, and Bedichek would discuss this. He was not a Russophobe. He wasn't a professional anti-communist or anything. None of us were. I knew nothing about the Communist Party; what I knew about it I didn't like about it. It seemed to me kind of like the foot-washing Baptists; to have the whole truth and nothing but the truth, and if you were outside the pale, you were outside the pale, brother, you can't come in. This is the way they struck me. But since we never saw any or laid eyes on any they weren't a problem in our lives.

But at any rate to my surprise and to Dobie's too, we both began to be called communists because we advocated black constitutional rights. We had to let them vote--we had to include them in the democratic processes of our society. It's absolutely unthinkable that we continue--now, we didn't want to do anything about segregation. Segregation was all right. But we did think they had a right to vote, that they had a right to go to good schools and to participate. We were very limited in the distance we went with this proposition of ours. But still this earned us the opprobrium of the establishment.

G: Who called you communists at the time?

F: The old-guard reactionary, violently--kind of what would now constitute the John Birch Society kind of mentality, rigidly right-wing thinking, you know, that. . . .

I never will forget, in 1944, I believe it was, I had been overseas for a year with the American Red Cross in the Middle East and had come back. I was quite a favorite in

speaking before service clubs and that sort of thing. And I got back about a month after--or I was asked to speak about a week after the Supreme Court came down with its decision that declared unconstitutional the segregation of blacks in the Democratic primary. That was in 1944.

G: Yes. ***Smith*** v. ***Allwright***.

F: And I was speaking before the Austin Lions Club and I thought this was a golden opportunity to say something that should be said. And I just had them eating out of my hand. I was telling them anecdotes about life in the Middle East and funny stories and living amongst the troops there. I said, "There's a large body of American troops there in American uniforms serving under the American flag whose skins are black. And I think the greatest signal that the United States has sent to them, the most heartening signal, is this decision that the Supreme Court reached two weeks ago declaring that democracy was alive and doing well on the home front, that they'd come back and could participate in their government. Believe me, it is something they all of them feel. They are all over there just like white soldiers are, in a land that they don't know, offering their lives and now it's for a cause. And I think this was the finest thing that could have happened."

And I was under the impression that they'd all burst into applause. Instead of that it [was] just as if I'd have flung a slop jar full of offal into their faces; it couldn't have created more chaos amongst them. There was a great grumbling and a mumbling. Dan Moody, former governor of Texas, was sitting there with three or four corporation lawyers, and there was the land commissioner, Bascom Giles, who was about mama's third cousin, I think, and a number of very distinguished Texans that just went into a

rage, just literally. I realized there was no use in trying to finish the speech, and they had just been eating out of my hand until that moment. So I hastily closed my remarks.

G: Were they challenging you or were they shouting at you?

F: Yes. "He ought to shut up. I don't know what he's doing, sounding off on something he doesn't know. He's saying things that don't"--and they were saying it out loud, you know. "He has no business saying a thing like that." I'll never forget Dan Moody, who was a red-haired man--at that time he was getting a little gray--came forward and he stuck his hand out to take mine--to shake my hand. I was standing up there shaking hands. He grabbed it and almost jerked me over the table, a very hostile grab, I realized; he wasn't pumping my hand or anything. He said, "I want you to know that if these goddamn--well, my body will be dead and lifeless before any nigger will ever vote in the state of Texas. It's not going to happen here!" And he said it with a passion that would really frighten you because it was so--the kind, "I am going to kill. I don't care if it costs me everything I've got, I'll destroy this idea."

Several of the others said, "You just ruined everything you were saying. What in the hell you got on that subject for is beyond me." And I remember the guy--wonderful guy, a lawyer--who had brought me, Jack Sparks [?], very fond of me. He had invited me to be there. He said, "Johnny, I swear you mess everything"--he'd got a headlock on me; he's a great big football player, University of Texas football player, and almost jerked me off my feet, supposedly a good-natured, fun gesture, but it was a very painful one. And down the table--

G: He was distressed at you also?

F: Oh, yes. Nobody--one man out of everybody there--they were all standing around, saying "God, that's a terrible thing." I just had thrown kerosene into a smoldering fire and it had flared up.

G: You were going to say, "Down the table. . . ?"

F: Oh. What would he have been? He was a minister there. Dr. John Barkley, who was Lyndon Johnson's reverend later. Dr. John Barkley came very ostentatiously to me and said, "John, you said something that needs very badly to be said in this country again and again and again. I want to congratulate you on getting it said here today," as a gesture of support and affirmation of what I said.

But that was a very important experience for me because I didn't realize--I had never realized the depth--after all, I was one of *them*. I had never realized the profundity of what a terrifying thing racism is in its uglier and more basic aspects, how violence is the ultimate answer racism has; violence, unrestrained violence. After that, it became known generally, because the community leaders were all there, that, "You want to watch this guy Faulk; he's a dangerous character. And watch this guy Dobie too. Dobie's just as bad. Dobie's saying this about"--but Dobie was a little more direct always.

I don't know why I looked to Lyndon for support in that. I felt we did have an ally in Lyndon Johnson, but I didn't know him. I had never met the man in my life.

And the war came along and was over. I knew John Connally since the 1930s and had been very fond of him. John and I always had a kind of mutual respect. He always treated me with great kindness and regard. We'd come through the Depression together. He had gone to the university the same time I had. We'd started the same year. He was a very good-looking guy and always had the approval and affection of the non-fraternity

people, and he had his little *coterie* of followers. But I'd always gotten along excellently with John Connally.

I forget just what the circumstances were. Oh, at The University of Texas we had the university radio station and Dobie and I would do a lot of folk stuff with them. I had these black sermons. I had a couple of black ministers go out and preach sermons that were really classics. We recorded them and I assumed kind of the leadership of--the interpreter of black folklore at the university.

There was a man named Tony Lumkin [?] that was head of the radio department there, and Tony was a friend of John Connally's. And apparently Lyndon was in the process of--or the Johnsons were in the process of setting up their radio station. As a matter of fact, they had Willard Deason involved in setting up a station called KVET. It was going to be a group of veterans. I think John Connally was involved in it and several others.

But anyhow Connally said, "You know, you ought to meet Lyndon Johnson. He's going to speak here at the Austin Public Library. And I want you to come down and meet him because he wants to meet you. He's very anxious to . . . ." And I was very pleased. To me it reflected well on Lyndon that he wanted to meet me. [Laughter] I went down there. I never will forget, I had to cancel something else to do it. And John couldn't stop him; he had somewhere else to go and John couldn't stop him. I felt like a damn fool. I'd gone down there to meet him and he went battin' by. I decided he was preoccupied with other things than meeting me, which wouldn't have been hard to explain.

G: He went to the library but he couldn't stop there and--?

F: He was at the library; he made his talk. And John had told me to come down about such and such [a time] and that they were going to have a question and answer period and then he'd take me around and introduce me to Lyndon; we were going to have a visit with him. So I went all cocked and primed to do it. By this time, Lyndon was making a pretty good showing for himself in Congress and a good reputation. But I remember he dashed by, didn't even stop. John Connally said, "Congressman Johnson, here's John Faulk." "I don't have time now. I've got to go." He had another appointment. I felt ignored, obviously. That was the reason I remembered it, is 'cause I felt ignored.

But at any rate, then after the war I went up to New York and CBS and was choppin' along in tall cotton, doing very well. For years I voted down here in Texas and then I changed my voting to New York. But I'd talk about Lyndon being my congressman from down there, and it was in 1952 or 1954 that--well, he had become senator by then--they called him "Landslide Lyndon," and he was catching it from both sides then. The Ronnie Dugger group would say he was a yellow-bellied coward, and you knew he was duplicitous and he's hearkening to the voice of George Brown. You'd hear these terrible things about him. And they called him "Landslide Lyndon" after his--there was a lot of contempt amongst the liberals for him.

In 1954 I knew I was very supportive of him because he attacked Allan Shivers and won the state from Shivers, broke the Shivers machine. Or he at least triumphed over them.

G: That was 1956.

F: Was it 1956? You're sure it wasn't 1954?

G: Yes. It was 1956. They had the fight over the control of the Democratic Party.

F: Yes, but the real liberals didn't support Lyndon or rather he didn't support them.

G: There was a rift there.

F: Yes, because I wasn't here, but I got full reports on it. Molly [Minnie] Fisher Cunningham and my sister, Texana, and Maury Maverick and a bunch of them, and J. Frank Dobie and all of them were furious at Lyndon Johnson and Sam Rayburn for trafficking with, trading out with the enemy as it were. I guess that's the year that Miss [Frankie] Randolph got it, wasn't it?

G: Yes.

F: You see my memory's not clear enough, because I didn't enter the scene then. They were decamped [?] and came to New York and made damn fools of themselves. It was terribly embarrassing. But the--

G: So you were in New York during this time?

F: Yes. But I had joined--I remember in 1954, I guess it was, in the Dudley Daugherty race, and I had written to Lyndon. I said that I don't vote down there but I'm going to change my vote back because you're standing firm for us, for the causes in Texas that I believe in, *et cetera*, *et cetera*. So I got a very gracious letter back.

And I had known everybody. I kind of had celebrity status in Austin because I would come back from CBS, visit my family here, and Dobie and Bedichek would all carry on over me. So the KLBJ--the KTBC people rather, there wasn't any KLBJ then--KTBC people who would come to New York would come to see me. I formed a very good relationship with Jesse Kellam and Cactus Pryor, Bob [O. P.] Bobbitt, who was married to Becky, Rebekah Johnson. I got along excellently with them and was very fond of them. I considered them kind of family and my home was always open to them

there in New York. I had a very big apartment. They'd come stay with me and I could do things for them and liked to do them.

Then one time--it was in 1955--

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F: In 1955 at the height of the [Joseph] McCarthy period when it was boring the hell out of me--I just saw national radio and television sliding into the slough of despond--a very bright friend of mine who knew Lyndon very well--see, I was supposed to have met Lyndon and didn't do it at Virginia Durr and Clifford Durr's down in--Tex Goldschmidt, a friend of mine in Washington, had taken me out to Virginia and Cliff's just to meet Lyndon. They felt he was a very important guy for me to meet, that there really was a man worthwhile in Texas. We went out, and Lyndon and Mrs. Johnson didn't get there for some reason or other. So I hadn't really met him. At any rate, I'd never shook his hand.

So this friend of mine came to me; his name was Palmer Weber, [who] was a brilliant man. He was a political scientist from the University of Virginia who was a Ph.D., one of the youngest Ph.D.s from the University of Virginia, as a matter of fact--an absolutely brilliant economist and political scientist. He knew Lyndon; knew all about him. He knew all about everybody that moved through the New Deal hierarchy. And he said--this is in 1955, the spring, about February of 1955--he said, “Let me tell you what you ought to do. Instead of wallowing around here in self-accusations, feeling useless, you ought to get hold of Lyndon Johnson. There's only two men in the United States that can finance a race for president in 1956: Lyndon Johnson and Averell Harriman.

"And the present plans are for Averell Harriman to run for president and Lyndon Johnson to run for vice president. You ought to get hold of Walter Jenkins or some of the boys and tell them you'd like to talk to Johnson about this and encourage him to do that. Then join forces with him, because he needs your input and he needs your connections here in New York. You've got the best connections in the world. You're well acquainted at the ***New York Times***, well acquainted at the ***Herald Tribune***; have good friends there."

See, I had never had had even a whimper about my political life at that time. It's the height of McCarthyism. And I had been pretty outspoken, you know. I hated the House Un-American Activities Committee. I hated McCarthyism. I hated J. Edgar Hoover, who was just an anathema to me. I felt they were elements of the destruction of this republic. They struck at the very taproot of our self-governing society.

So he said, "You could have a very positive influence. Lyndon Johnson likes you very much. He knows about you. He knows far more about you than you have any idea he does. He's watched you ascend the ranks here."

So I called ol' Walter Jenkins and I said, "Walter, next time you're in town give me a call. I'd like to take you to lunch. I'd like to talk to you about something." Well, hell, he called back in about two minutes and said, "What is it?" I said, "Well, I want to talk to you about--it's a very private thing. I'd like to get your thoughts on it." Because I'd always liked Walter Jenkins; he and I hit it off fine. He said, "Well, I'm going to be there Tuesday." I said, "We'll have lunch at Louis Armand's," and we did. I told him, "You know, I'd be glad to join Johnson's forces down in Texas if they could make a place for me down there. I have a wife and three children; I have to support them. But I'm very fond of Cactus Pryor. I know KTBC very well. I really haven't anything definite in

mind but you might tell the Senator"--I think he had just become majority leader then. By God, within twenty-four hours Walter Jenkins was on the phone and said, "The Senator wants you to come to his office, wants to know if you could come down to Washington to spend the day with him Easter Sunday," which was the next Sunday. And I said, "I don't see any reason I couldn't." He said, "Good. We'll pay your expenses; we'll pay the fare. We just want you to come down here."

I'd forgotten I had an engagement Easter Sunday. I had to do the commentary on a fashion show at the Plaza Hotel on a ladies' hat show, Easter bonnet parade at the Plaza. So I missed the plane I was to catch. I was an hour late getting there and I had had my friends call him down there and tell Walter not to come out to the National Airport to pick me up until I found out exactly when I was going to come. But I would for sure get there at twelve. I was supposed to be there at eleven but I'd get there by twelve without fail.

So I got down there at twelve and there was Walter and he looked very happy to see me. And I said, "Well, you got my message." He said, "No." I said, "You mean you've been sitting here since eleven o'clock waiting for me?" He said, "Yes. I knew you would come sometime." I said, "Goddamn. I'm embarrassed. You're not but about ten minutes [from] downtown and you're sitting out there waiting for an hour for me." It was my first touch of the total obedience that Walter had to Lyndon Johnson. He didn't even think it was something unusual about waiting. "No, I'll wait until you come. He sent me out to get you and I came to get you. That's what I'm doing here." Which was a fascinating thing, you know. All of which was not going without being noticed by me.

That was Easter, 1953 [1955?]. I don't remember what day it fell on then but it obviously was a Sunday.

I remember we drove out to the Senator's house and the Senator was standing in the front yard out in Georgetown. He was very gracious, very nice, said he knew my sister Mary, and hoped that I was up to the whole family's standards of decent living, *et cetera*. Compliments were exchanged. We went in and--I'll never forget, Palmer Weber had said, "Now what you do when you go down there and start talking to Lyndon--Lyndon never shakes any trees. He just walks around with a fruit basket in front of him. He walks under them and something falls, he runs to it and catches it in his basket. But he doesn't hurry things up. He waits for them to drop into his basket.

"Since you've got little time to deal with this matter, what you ought to do is get in a conversation with him. He'll be a very gracious host. He'll be as anxious to know why you've come down as you are to know how he feels about this subject. So what you do is tell him you were a year too young to be active in Roosevelt's inaugural race, but that in your opinion Franklin D. Roosevelt represented all that was good and worthwhile in American political life, and it would have been a source of greatest joy to you to have participated in his ascension to the presidency. And that in your studies and your thoughts and reflections you found that Lyndon Johnson embodies every single principle and ideal that Roosevelt stood for, more nearly than any other political figure in the United States. And that if you thought that Lyndon Johnson could be persuaded to ever run for president of the United States, you would very seriously consider giving up your career in radio and television and going down. You felt that that would be the greatest contribution you could make to the future of your country, which is very dear to you."

He said, “Lyndon Johnson will run his legs way out in front of him and look at his feet kind of like he's speculating on his feet and then he will say to you, ‘I aspire to no other office than that I presently hold, serving the people of Texas. I have no plans, absolutely none, to run for any other office. But I deeply appreciate your remarks.’ That's what you'll hear. It'll come to you through your ears. But that's not what he'll be saying. He'll be saying, 'This is one of the smartest sons of bitches I've had in this house in a long time. He has insights that are worth cultivating.'“

I played it right exactly as Palmer said and that's exactly what happened. The Senator said, “I'm not interested in any other job but I do appreciate deeply your thoughts on that matter. But I think that we ought to think about now working out something so you could join forces. You don't want to waste your time there in New York. Come down to Texas with your own people and help me frame a Democratic Party that will have meaning in Texas; help us achieve the ends we are looking for.”

He asked me what kind of work I can do. I said, “Well, I broadcast now. I make my living doing it five times a week, an hour every day.” He said, “Well, we've got a station in Waco, an FM television station. You know anything about television?” “Yes, I do a lot of it but I'm not an authority on it.” He said, “Well, we'll have to think in terms of getting you up there to help us get that on the air, since we're going to have a network of television stations. We've got one in Bryan, one there and one down in the [Rio Grande] Valley. So we're going to have something for you to do.” He said, “We can all grow together, use that as our pad, as it were. And we'll serve Texas together.”

We shook hands and I said, “Well, where do we go from here? I'm going to have to think about this; I'm going to have to talk with my business managers and all that. I

have been making a good living here and I will be, in a way, shifting careers very abruptly." "All right. You talk to them."

G: Did you discuss salary or a percentage at all?

F: Yes, we did and I don't remember the details of it. It had to do with--oh, I said something about I'd want stock in the company. That's right. Palmer Weber had said, "You get a percentage of the company. As it grows you'll become a rich man. Lyndon Johnson's going to be a very wealthy man from this radio and television world." So I discussed that and he said, "Nobody but Walter Jenkins has any now. We don't have anybody outside of our family with any stock at all. But we'll think about this." I think as a beginning salary I said I didn't want to get more than Cactus Pryor. I was very fond of Cactus Pryor. I think Cactus was getting about a third as much as I was getting in a week or less than that. I said, "But I don't want to start above him because he and I are very good friends now and I think it would start off on a bad note, bad blood." He thought that was very gracious of me and very considerate.

Thus ended our first parley. The girls came home--Luci and Lynda. They were just little girls then, not even teenagers. Homer Thornberry and his children came over, and Walter Jenkins and his children.

So that started our relationship. I'd get a call from Walter at least once a day with some new idea or something they wanted me to do. The Senator wanted me to do this; the Senator wanted me to do that. Of course I was all-out and gung ho for helping. We agreed on a publicity statement to make, because the industry had to know why I was leaving New York--I had a very successful show there and I wasn't going to be there

anymore--why I was going to Texas to join what was called then the Texas Broadcasting Corporation's activities.

And also he called for us to get our asses in high gear and get to figuring out how to--I had to tell CBS that I was leaving. And they had to replace me, because getting a replacement takes some time; somebody that could--I was sold out; I was making them an awful lot of money. And I owed that to CBS. And of course I was terribly excited over moving back to Texas; it was a new activity.

You have to know the deadly, deadly atmosphere of the McCarthy period to realize what a desolating experience it was to be in New York radio and television and have any political sensitivities whatever during that period. You had to be guarded. You couldn't talk about the United Nations, for instance; that was suspect.

G: What else?

F: You couldn't discuss racial matters. There was just a whole group of no-nos that you couldn't [do] and you had to be very circumspect on where you appeared, with whom you appeared. But hell, I was popping down to Washington all the time and the Senator would have me down there. George was his name--was his press secretary then.

G: Reedy.

F: Reedy, George Reedy was his press secretary. Walter called me one afternoon and said, "The National Press Club is going to have their annual bash this year and they want you to emcee it. The Senator has recommended that they use you to emcee it, or they've asked the Senator if he would use his good offices to see if they could get you to emcee it." I said, "What will it require?" "Well, it would require you to come down to. . . ."

Well, before that, that's right; they'd had a Sam Rayburn Day; [he was] seventy-five--I don't remember--sometime in April or March or whatever it was; it was his birthday. That was going to be a great Democratic rallying day. Mrs. Roosevelt was coming, Dean Acheson and all the celebrities. Lyndon was going to make one of the principal speeches. Harry Truman was going to make a principal speech. It was going to be held at the Armory, I think, or some huge damn place; tables all around, a big Democratic affair.

And they asked me to come down the Friday night before, because the Senator was going to have a breakfast for the Democratic National Committee in the Democratic Caucus Room I guess it was, someplace there where they could have breakfast.

So I went down the Friday night before, and at six o'clock I was awakened to get ready to ride on out. We rode on out and rode down to the--as the Senator was very careful to explain to me, if the Democrats had had possession of the White House, this would have been held in the White House. But they had to hold it in--the only available place for Democrats at that time was this dining room they held it in.

He wanted me to do a very special thing for him. I had a piece called, “Care and Preservation of Re-publicans,” and it was ostensibly an ol' boy from Bastrop County saying, “Now I want ever’body to hold up his hand knows what a Re-publican is. See, ya don't know, do ya? You're Re-publican ignorant, ain't ya? That's our trouble here in Texas, we've gone and left open season on 'em t' where they've all disappeared. That's what I'm here t'speak t'ya about.

“I thought I knowed what they was, but I didn't know. I'd heered they was this; I’d heered they was that. Ol' man Mosteller, he's a Baptist deacon, wouldn't deliberately

lie, said he knowed what they was. He'd run 'em with his dogs, caught a many of 'em and they got shells on 'em. Now he's got them confused with armadillers. That ain't what a Re-publican is." And he rambles on like this.

What he wants to do is start a reservation to preserve the Re-publicans because they're a disappearing species. "It's that way all over the country now since Roo-sevelt came along. He [the Republican] just didn't know how t'get out of the way and he just dwindled off to nothing. Some of ya that's economic-minded are gonna say, 'Well, stuff a pair of 'em and put 'em in front of the White House up there where people can go there and look at 'em if ya want t' look at 'em.' Nossir. We owe it t' the chillern to have some real live 'uns for 'em t' see." And he goes on. God, it's hilariously funny. They were just laughing up a storm.

Well, Lyndon had me do that. He introduced me as a constituent of his from down in Texas and he had all of his buddies; Senator [Richard] Russell from Georgia and Senator [Theodore] Green, an old gentleman about two thousand years old from Rhode Island, and Hubert Humphrey on the balls of his feet, bouncing. At any rate, I was a sensational hit and Senator Johnson was just pleased as hell. But he never did say that; he did never say I was good or anything, which I discovered was an interesting idiosyncrasy of his. Cactus Pryor was his favorite emcee for things, but he never did compliment, never--it might call for a raise or might give one an exaggerated notion of his worth or importance to the Senator.

At any rate, from there we went to the Sam Rayburn breakfast, which was one hell of a swinging affair. Mr. Sam was there and we did a lot of good-will conversation. I was just sailing along fine in Washington.

Then the following week, or a couple of weeks later, was when we had the National Press Club thing. I was trying to learn to be a good political ally, supportive and run to the well when I had to get water and not ask questions and that kind of thing. I don't fit into that role very well. I don't do things unquestioningly. I could never be part of the Lyndon entourage, but I hadn't found that out yet. Because it calls for--or it seemed to me to call for--a kind of a complete and absolute no-questions-asked obedience. No more arguments offered, no dissent offered, lest Lyndon regard it as disloyalty or less than full cooperation. Of course I had trouble with that.

At any rate, I go down to do this big dinner and the Washington press corps meets me and we have a talk. And I'm talking about the kind of thing that I'll be doing and I said, "I've got several jokes that I guess I'm going to have to leave out because I understand that Senator [William] Knowland"--who was the minority leader then--"would get his feelings hurt. And I didn't come down here to create any problems for Senator Johnson, for whom I have the utmost respect."

And these are pretty anti-Republican jokes. One of them was--they had Quemoy and Matsu [which] were two islands off the China coast. Senator Knowland was advocating that we invade them, that we unleash Chiang Kai-shek from Taiwan. Unleash him and let him go take those islands and then sweep right on through the mainland and take over China. That was a big issue then. And I said, "The trouble there is, it would be kind of like unleashing--there's no question that Senator Knowland knows what he's talking about because he knows that Chiang Kai-shek has got Mao Tse-tung's Red Army locked in between the Pacific Ocean and the Gobi Desert. He could just go through them

like a dose of salts through a widder woman; he'd wipe 'em out overnight, especially if he could get the Harvard debate team to help him."

One guy said, "Listen, Senator Knowland really believes that and if he thought you were making fun of him, he'll get up and walk out of the thing; that's his style. He won't be the butt of a joke." I said, "Well, then I'll strike that; that doesn't belong in there because I don't want any ill will. I don't want to be down here creating ill will."

So about three or four hours later George Reedy comes to visit: "Oh God, you have stepped in it now. You told the press that Lyndon Johnson is blue-penciling your script and taking out any unpleasant references to the Republicans." And I said, "I haven't done any such a thing." He said, "Well, the Senator thinks you have and he is in a high dudgeon; he's in a state of outrage." Well, I was indignant. I said, "Somebody's misrepresented what I said to him. I'll go see him right now." He said, "No, no. Wait till things calm down some." I said, "No, sir, I will not; I don't want to leave him like that."

Well, at any rate, the dinner comes off. It comes time for the reception, the cocktail party at the Press Club. So I go up there and my chief assistant is Vice President Nixon, who was not very popular but who was a *very* sweet guy; he just was gracious as hell. He said, any way he could help? So I had it rigged up. I said, "I'll tell you what you do." He was going to play the piano. I said, "Fine. You play the 'Missouri Waltz?'" "Yes." I said, "All right, you get behind the curtain on this piano; we'll have you behind the curtain and you start playing [hums tune]." That was Harry Truman's favorite tune. Of course the piano was the one musical instrument that he could play. And I said, "I'll tell everybody we've got the best minds in the Western Hemisphere gathered there that night: the Senate, the Supreme Court, members of the cabinet, and I

can give them a guess, 'Who is our mystery guest tonight?'" There was some show that went like that.

And Mr. Sam Rayburn was one of the good old guys there--he'd taken a fancy to me, Mr. Sam had. He knew Mama somehow or another or knew of her; I forget how it was. Maybe he met her when he was down here in the legislature; I don't know. But he was very much Lyndon's sponsor.

So I was sitting there with ol' Nixon, who was as I say a very hospitable, very pleasant guy, wanted to do everything he could to make it a success. We were going to have him wearing a pair of glasses and playing the piano. So here comes Lyndon, Homer Thornberry and the Speaker in, Mr. Sam. I excused myself from friend Nixon and said, "Listen, I've got to go over there and see Senator Johnson. There's been a bit of a misunderstanding between us and I want to get it straightened out now; I don't want it to go any longer."

So I went over and--"Senator, I just want to say that that matter this afternoon"--"Well, I don't know why you'd do that. You're in Washington, D.C. playing big league ball now, Johnny. You ought to know that. You don't have to say anything to 'em for them to make something out of it. Some groundskeeper said that the President had ordered--squirrels overpopulated the White House grounds and they ordered the numbers reduced; take them out and put them in another park where there'd be more room for them. And the headlines all carried, 'President Declares War on Squirrels.' This is what goes on. This is the way they play it here and it's very mean, rough baseball. You have to be very circumspect in what you say." I said, "Well, I understand that but I want you to know that nothing was intended. I didn't say what I was quoted as having

said at all. You hadn't seen nor did you care what the hell I was going to say, as far as I knew."

So Sam Rayburn says, "I heard about this. What's happened there? What was this big blow-up about, Lyndon?" And Lyndon said, "Well, it was--Johnny can tell you." I said, "Well," and then I told him--Mr. Sam. And he said, "Lyndon, what in the world is the matter with you? You pussyfoot. Well, why couldn't he tell that joke?" Lyndon hadn't said I couldn't tell it, he didn't know what the joke was. He said, "You're so scared you'll step on their damn toes. They need their toes stepped on. They need their whole foot stomped on occasionally. Lyndon, you're scared of your shadow. Damn, you pussyfoot around them." And then Lyndon's off on another tear; it set him off again.

At any rate, I sat between him and Mr. Sam. I was supposed to sit between Lyndon and Vice President Nixon; I was the emcee of the thing. But the guy sitting between Lyndon and Mr. Sam came to me; his name is Arthur Schwartz. He was a song writer, had a smash hit on Broadway; I forget what it was now. At any rate he was there and he said he'd give me five hundred dollars to let him sit next to Nixon, because Nixon was his lifetime hero. I said, "You don't owe me a penny. You take the seat and I'll sit between Mr. Johnson and Mr. Rayburn." So I sat between Mr. Johnson and Mr. Rayburn. In the process of dinner, Mr. Rayburn got to telling me what a son of a bitch McCarthy was.

See, what had happened to Sam Rayburn was, he'd been in politics a long time in Washington. He was a shrewd observer, but they had changed the rules of the game in the last several years and he couldn't adjust to this. They had introduced something brand new into the political dialogue in the United States: treason. To oppose a certain point of

view, you could call your opponent a traitor. Mr. Sam knew that this was a charge that historically--I don't whether he knew the history of it or not--but he knew historically this was what tyrants had used to shut up opponents; just charge them with treason. Then you're arguing about something else altogether. He's suddenly defending himself, see.

And this was low pool to Mr. Sam. Mr. Sam couldn't adjust to this. This was outside the acceptable bounds of political discourse. I don't know whether I'm making myself clear or not but I understood exactly what was happening; that this could destroy political dialogue in this country, which is the--after all, it's the very life's blood of a self-governing, democratic society.

And Mr. Sam said, "There's one man more dangerous than Joe McCarthy in this country and he's that son of a bitch sitting right there." Mr. Sam had a chunk of prime beef on his fork and shook it practically under ol' Nixon's nose. He said, "He's the most dangerous man living in America today."

Mr. Sam was a prophetic old cuss. He understood the system and he understood that there were bounds beyond which the system wouldn't stand one going. It no longer was the system then; that it no longer was a self-governing, democratic society. It impressed me very deeply because, number one, I concurred with it. I didn't know that much about Nixon but it turns out Mr. Sam was absolutely right.

In all this process, you see, Lyndon Johnson was more or less courting me when I'd go down there and we'd go somewhere together, where we'd have talks. He was saying things that was explaining the way the system worked there in Washington to me, and they were very wise things; I mean, [he] knew what he was talking about. I remember him saying, "I know how you feel about the Talmadges of Georgia, 'He's an

old, red-suspendered man.' Well, his son Gene is one of the brightest young men in the Senate up here, and will make one hell of a senator if he's treated right, if he's cultivated right. And I intend to cultivate him right."

And any walks through the Capitol that I would go on with Senator Johnson, he'd point out, "This is part of the perks of being the head of the party here in Washington," when we'd go out to the dinners and whatnot, the receptions that we'd go to.

I remember Miss Terrell Webb, Dr. [Walter Prescott] Webb's wife, was up there--she's Maury Maverick's widow and had been a good friend of Lyndon's, and [she] kept a very animated conversation going on. She was very fond of [Lady] Bird. And there was a wonderful, wonderful raconteur from Dallas--I can't think of his name; God, he was beautiful, funny, one of the great and delightful storytellers of Texas; I don't know why his name escapes me--Bill Kittrell--God, I could listen to him all night telling his stories about the. . . .

All of this gave me some good insights into Lyndon Johnson; he was a man who wanted to understand this society and understand what was good for it. He genuinely wanted that. He wanted to be a positive force. He enjoyed power and he only respected power. See, he had no use for Ronnie Dugger and Senator Yarborough, and Senator Yarborough's followers were bores to him. They were people who didn't have power and never would have power; the people would never follow them.

I spent some very happy hours at Lyndon's house. He was a very lovely host, a very thoughtful host. God, I remember one morning waking up. I had gotten up about three o'clock and I heard somebody coming up the stairs. I was in the top apartment, top rooms. I heard voices and it scared the hell out of me. I figured something had

happened, somebody had fainted or died or something. It turned out it was Walter Jenkins--oh, that's right; I was down in the sun room reading, where I had gone down to read and wouldn't disturb anyone.

Tape 2 of 2, Side 1

G: --going up the stairs in his house.

F: It was like walking up a history of Lyndon Johnson's races; pictures of him, he and his father.

G: Photographs.

F: On the walls all the way up the stairs to the top one. Well, at any rate, I was down there, and I got up to see who in the hell it was coming back down the stairs. It was Walter Jenkins. I said, "Oh, Walter, something happen?" He said, "No, the Senator wanted to see me," like it was a perfectly ordinary thing. It just happened to be three o'clock in the morning that he wanted to "see me."

G: The story has been told or at least you've been quoted as telling the story about Mildred Wickes canceling two of her--

F: Yes, that was a very important story.

G: Was this after this National Press thing or after the Truman--?

F: After the Truman dinner. We had gotten up at six in the morning. We'd gone to this breakfast and then to Sam Rayburn's Texas breakfast the Texas Club gave for him. And along about eleven o'clock, God, my tailgate was beginning to drag, and Senator Johnson was busy going out to the airport to meet incoming dignitaries, Mrs. Roosevelt and others of her ilk. So I was there in Walter Jenkins' office and I said, "Walter, I think I'll go." "Well, the Senator wants you to wait here." So I said, "Well, there's no use in me waiting

here. I'm going home to take a nap because I've got to be functional tonight and I won't be. I'm used to taking a nap after lunch when I get up so early."

So he called the Senator's office and the Senator said, "Well, Mrs. Johnson will come by and get him and take him home." I said, "Oh goddamn, I can catch a cab out to the house. There's nothing to that." "No. The Senator wants Mrs. Johnson to take you and that's the way it will have to be." I mean, there were no ifs, ands and buts about it. So Mrs. Johnson, bless her heart, came and got me and drove me home. I got a good nap that afternoon and we went out about six-thirty to the dinner in the Majority Leader's car, big limo, with Miss Terrell Webb and--what's his name that I mentioned a moment ago?

G: Bill Kittrell?

F: Bill Kittrell and me and Lyndon and Mrs. Johnson went out there. It was quite an elaborate affair. I mean it was a big-time thing, a big reception before. And I met Mrs. Roosevelt and Dean Acheson--and my joke on the care and preservation of Republicans was the great hit. It was as though I had just invented something. All of them would ask me about it and just chuckle mightily. Lyndon had told them about it.

So then the great dinner came off. I mean, it was a real doozy of a dinner with all its speeches, acknowledgements and whatnot. So at eleven-thirty at night it broke up. We go out and get in the limo and I was just absolutely exhausted. We get home and the Senator said, "You don't feel like going to bed. How about staying down here and let's talk a minute?"

I said, "Fine."

He said, "I just got this special delivery package, a week's billings at KTBC, from Jesse Kellam. It's the kind of thing you're going to have to get acquainted with." So he

starts flipping through it. [Laughter] That's where he says, "Son of a gun!" This is a man that had been head of state all day long, been going since six in the morning. "Son of a gun, Mildred Wickes has canceled on Thursday night. She canceled a four-bit damn commercial." And I'll have to say my jaw went slack. I couldn't believe it. There wasn't a business manager in the whole goddamn United States that would have caught that kind of trivial detail, but the senior Senator from Texas damn well did.

Then one day he'd gotten everything arranged; Jesse Kellam had found me a man up in Waco to rent me an apartment, lease me a home to move into, in Waco, Texas, [a man] named Jim Green or something like that. I don't think that was his name but I'll use that name. And he was a well-known Wacoan, and heard that I was looking for a place to lease. So I leased it, sent him the money in advance and everything. And this was along the middle of April and I was to leave May 1, was to move down May 1.

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On several occasions I'd seen Lyndon Johnson browbeat him in the most savage way, really just treat him as though he couldn't hit the ground with his hat; a hopelessly stupid, inadequate human being, which was [O.P. "Bob"] Bobbitt's great vulnerable spot. Lyndon played to it to hell and gone.

I remember Bobbitt and I were sitting with Lyndon one Sunday afternoon down in Georgetown. Lyndon wanted a report on what we had done about the station in Waco. And I said, "Well, Senator, I haven't done anything. I have to go down there." "What do you mean? I want it organized. I want to know what's going to happen down there. Bobbitt, what have you had done about it?" So Bobbitt said, "Well, you know the station down in Bryan, I was working on that. I was doing so and so"--Lyndon stopped and said, "Goddamn it, I ask you what color that red barn is over there and you say you think it has a tin roof. What the hell kind of answer is that? Why can't you be direct? Why do you have to pussyfoot around?" Just in a savage way, just ground him into nothing.

And Lyndon had a capacity to chew people out. He never did visit it on me. He never did do a chewing out on me at all. I don't chew out well. I don't permit people to talk to me like that. There's something that balks in me. I'll remove myself from their presence before I'll hear that kind of talk.

So Bobbitt came to New York as he frequently did, and he came up to the station and sat through my show--my show was on from five to six--and said that Jesse Kellam wanted us to come down to the Roosevelt Hotel down Madison Avenue a couple of blocks to have dinner with him. I said, "I can't. I have this other engagement with these potential clients down there, at y'all's instructions, Bobbitt." "Well, can you come by a little while before, just to see Jesse?" And I did.

The burden of Jesse's song was that he wanted to--Mrs. Kellam and Mrs. Johnson and Lyndon were sitting down there in Washington worried to death about me. They were afraid they had persuaded me over my best interests to take this job down there, give up my career in New York when actually I should not. They suggested that the best

thing to do was to just call off the whole contract for forty-eight hours and let me think it over, reflect on it and make sure that this was what I wanted to do, to have this whole change in my career.

And I said, "Oh Lord, there's nothing for me to reflect on. I've given up my apartment. I've rented a place down there. I've served notice; a man's going to replace me next week. I'm all ready to go. They've been giving farewell parties for me. It's been advertised in the paper, 'Mrs. Claudia T. Johnson of the Texas Broadcasting Corporation has announced the appointment of John Henry Faulk as executive vice president in charge of public relations,'" or some empty title like that. I said, "No, I'm not"--"Well, pick up the phone and call Bird and Lyndon; they're waiting for you down there, and just tell them you'd like to do this. Then they'd feel a lot better about it. On Sunday they feel that they'd given you a rough"--I said, "There's no point in me doing anything that silly. I haven't changed my mind. I'm ready to go." I said, "I've got to go to dinner because they're having this farewell dinner"--this bunch of advertising agency guys were--"for me."

So I thought about it when I went to the dinner and I said, "I'll stop by on my way home tonight." It was downtown, down mid-Manhattan. So I stopped by and I said, "No, I haven't changed my mind at all." So Kellam said, "Bobbitt, get that briefcase out from under that bed right there." He got out two great big thick briefs. He said, "This is a suit that has been filed against Texas Broadcasting Corporation alleging that the senior Senator from Texas--filed by a bunch of Republicans down there--alleging that the senior Senator from Texas was using undue influence in behalf of the Texas Broadcasting Corporation. We've pretty much agreed that it could be very damaging to the Senator's

career if this suit breaks into the open. We're going to have to sell out in Texas and what actually we think is best for you to do is to not go to Texas." And I said, "Well, where in the hell does that leave me? What's your obligation to me?" He said, "A very profound and a very deep one. We know that; don't you worry."

Well, I was just floored by this. That's what the whole evening had been about. It was dumbfounding. And I went home. I got in a cab and on the way up there I said, "Goddamn, they were trying to trick me into calling the Senator and calling this off, so it would have been me who asked for a loophole in the contract. What kind of cheap shit is this? I've had a dozen contracts canceled. Your lawyers always sit down and work those out. Your agent and your lawyer sit down and work out what's equitable. And here they pull a shoddy stunt like that." Oh God, I was just in a white fury, beside myself with outrage. I called my lawyer and I called my business manager. We flexed our muscles and he said, "Has that damn fool got any idea what position he's put you into, one of the major figures in the New York market?" Oh, and I couldn't *tell* anyone the reason that I wasn't going because it could hurt the price of the sale of the station if word got out that they were crowded by political exigencies into selling.

G: They were going to sell only the Waco station or they were going to sell out completely?

F: Everything. Sell out entirely, as I remember it. The upshot was that I got hold of this fellow Palmer Weber that knew Lyndon so well. I said, "By God, I'm outraged." He said, "Well, Lyndon doesn't know what he's done. All you have to do is treat him like a man, just don't corner him or he'll come out over the top of you. Just give him a way out, think of something he can do. Let him out."

So I got my lawyer to draw up a--oh, I went down to see the Senator and Mrs. Johnson. They happened to be in New York at the Roosevelt Hotel. I went down to see them and I said, "Senator, I've got to have some kind of adjustment here." "Well, what do you want? I didn't know you really were taking this all that seriously. We're trying to save you from going down there to Texas, going into oblivion"--and it's all an act of consideration for me. I said, "I don't think you understand the gravity of this matter. I've given up my job in New York. They've got a man coming to replace me and I'll be without any means of support when my last day at CBS comes about, and I have to have some means." "Well, you get your lawyers to draw up a paper for what they think this is worth and we'll sit down and talk about it, if you think we had a contract." I said, "Well, I know we had a contract. There was no question in my mind. If there was a question in your mind about it, Senator, well, we better let our lawyers settle it." He said, "Well, I don't want some Jew lawyer here in New York. I don't want to argue with some Jew lawyer here in New York about it. We were born up and down the creek from each other down there in Texas. We can get this settled."

But he had Ed Clark. Posh Oltorf said, "Trouble with Ed Clark is he looks like a Jew and talks like something else."

Well, at any rate, I was pretty frantic. I didn't know what the hell I was going to do because they said, "Look, Lyndon Johnson can get on the floor of the Senate and denounce you for anything you want and you can't do a damn thing about it. He can give his version of this to the public, [that] he don't know what you're talking about. He has congressional privilege; you don't." But the Senator said, "You get your business man to

come in here with a figure and have breakfast with me tomorrow morning and we'll go over it and see what we can settle on."

So the next morning I went down there with this hundred thousand dollar-settlement. Got down there at ten o'clock; we were going to have brunch. And the Senator was away on an engagement but he was coming home. He called and said, "Just hold Johnny there. I'll be right there." I sat down and talked to Kellam and Mrs. Johnson and Bobbitt, bless his heart. Jesse Kellam--I don't know whether you ever knew him, but he was a very cold cucumber, very cold cucumber, a football coach. I think they called him Coach, Coach Kellam.

At any rate, twelve o'clock came and no Lyndon. He called and said, "I'll be there at one. Just hold Johnny there." At one o'clock he called and said, "I'm sorry, I've gotten delayed. I'll be there in another thirty minutes."

G: This is one in the afternoon?

F: Yes. One p.m., yes. "Keep him there." So he said, "Well, I'm afraid I'm imposing on y'all. Y'all go on and order up lunch, order up sandwiches. Don't order me one. I'll snatch something on the way over but y'all have your lunch." So we ordered up lunch and had it. It's very awkward, you know. What the hell are you making conversation about? Jesse Kellam hadn't commented on this hundred thousand dollars. He just looked at it, no expression on his face at all.

So about three I said, "Listen, I'm going to have to go up to the thing. He said he'd be there by three. Tell the Senator if he's not here by three I have to go back up to my office"--back up the street about six blocks to CBS--"because I've got to get this afternoon's show put together." So I left about three-thirty, got up there a little bit before

four. When I got there Sam Slate, the program director for CBS, was watching for me when I came up. He took me in the men's room and said, "This is very important. If you mention that you heard it from me I'm a dead duck, but Lyndon Johnson has been here all day up in the president's office, up in Frank"--

G: Stanton?

F: --"Stanton's office." He says, "They're plotting something. I don't know what it is, but he sent down here to the legal department three times getting your records at CBS. And what he's trying to prove is that you were out at CBS; that you would have been out here, that you didn't have a job here really." I said, "That couldn't be." "And he's going to confront you with it to shake you up. He has these statements from the legal department of CBS."

I was scandalized. But then I made a resolution. I said, "Wait a minute; if them boys want to play hard-knuckle ball, we'll play it." Because I didn't have anything to lose; I had nothing but to gain. I knew the senior Senator from Texas had a hell of a lot to lose and the president of CBS, Frank Stanton, had a hell of a lot to lose.

So after I did my show that night I was supposed to meet Lyndon for drinks and to settle the matter. I went down there and when I walked into the room, he and Kellam and Bobbitt and Mrs. Kellam and Mrs. Johnson were there and he opened up on me. He said, "I thought you had a little sense. There's just nothing to you. You're a fraud. You weren't anything at CBS. You sold me a bill of goods on who you were. Now you're claiming--Kellam's shown me this absurd bill that you've got." He just began to berate me.

I said, "Wait a minute, Senator. I didn't come down here to hear that. I thought you wanted to discuss settling this between me and you. If you don't, I'm not interested in listening to that trash you're talking now." And this took him aback. He didn't prepare for me to react like that because he was saying it in a very hostile, bullying term. And he said, "If you make me crush your head, I'll do it. You'd better understand power. You're not even being intelligent in this thing, trying to hold me up like that." And he said it with a great deal of conviction and sincerity as though he really believed it. He was fighting off an attack. So I knew I was holding the cards.

So I said, "Senator, you're embarrassing me in the presence of Mrs. Johnson and you're embarrassing me for the people of Texas. I'm going to leave. I'll not stay here and hear that kind of conversation."

"But I do want to say something to you. We've talked about the difference in [sic] you and Roosevelt and I want to make it very clear right now that I see the difference. Roosevelt always possessed power. You've allowed power to possess you. God have mercy on the people of Texas."

I was so proud of myself coming up with that quip that I opened the door and went sailing out. He comes bounding out after me and I won't give him the time of day. I punched the elevator and got on and he's still trying to argue, "Wait a minute. Wait a minute. Now you see we lose our temper and we fly off the handle." And he didn't know exactly what to do.

So I went home, and I was to go to a cocktail party that night; Lannie Ross' [?] home. No, on the way home in a cab; that's right, I went home in a cab and I resolved what I was going to do, that I was going to fight this damn thing to a dead standstill; that

I wouldn't be treated in any such cavalier manner as that; and that since power didn't overwhelm me and power was not one of my ambitions--possession of power--that it didn't work with me. But I had promised Sam Slate that I wouldn't betray him to Carl Ward [?], because Carl Ward was the station manager and he was the one that had gotten all the communications from the legal department.

So I decided to trick Mr. Ward into committing himself. So the next morning I went in and said, "Carl, I've served this station for six years and made it a great deal of money and it's made me a lot of money. And I understand that yesterday you turned over material to the senior Senator from Texas that he's not entitled to have, concerning my relationships to this station, and that you certainly weren't entitled to give him; weren't authorized by me to give him." Carl Ward's face kind of blanched and he said, "Well, John"--I said, "The Senator has told me all about it yesterday afternoon. I just could not believe that an organization to whom I've never had anything but the most loyal and positive relationships would do a thing like this, and I'd like to have it from you that there's not a word, a scintilla of truth in it." He said, "Well, Johnny, it's a misunderstanding but it can be straightened out." And I said, "But they did then, didn't they?" He said, "Well, when the president of the network, Frank Stanton calls, obviously I don't have any choice. I work for him. I have to comply with his wishes." Well, that's all I needed. He confirmed it. He said, "He and Senator Johnson were having lunch and getting this thing straightened out."

So I thanked him kindly but I had my opening. Went to my office; I had to do my show from five to six; called Frank Stanton's office and said, "Tell Dr. Stanton that I want to see him, John Henry Faulk's calling." She said, "Oh, Mr. Faulk, he's not taking

any calls at all. He's getting ready to go to Washington on the six-ten. He has his passage booked and he has to leave here at five-thirty-five." And I said, "Well, I think he better skip that. You tell him that John Henry Faulk just called and ask him if he don't want to talk to me." She said, "There's was no way to get word in to him. He is in a very closed and important meeting." So I said, "Well, just tell him that. That's all I'm asking you to do. You don't have to take responsibility for him replying."

Two minutes later, Frank Stanton: "Hello, John. How are you? How's Grandpa Bible?" who was a character that I used on my show. I said, "Well, Dr. Stanton, I better come up to see you. I can't come 'til quarter 'til six." He said, "Well, Johnny, I have to leave and go down and catch my train by then." I said, "Well, I think this maybe takes first precedence. It's a very, very important matter. It has to do with me and Senator Johnson and a very serious breach of contract that has taken place." "Aren't you going to Texas?" I said, "No. I'm not going to Texas. And I think you know the details of that."

Well, that came as a surprise to him. I don't know what Lyndon had told him to get him to get this information but I don't think he told him the truth. "So I'll be up there at a quarter 'til six." He said, "All right, I'll wait here for you."

I went up there and there he sat, his wire-haired terrier on the desk beside him. I said, "Dr. Stanton, I understand that Senator Johnson spent yesterday lunch with you having you get information from the legal department about me that he was not authorized to ask for and that you were certainly not authorized to turn over to him. Now my lawyer said this is collusion between CBS and the senior Senator from Texas and I can't believe it."

He was pretty shocked at this. He said, "My God, aren't you going to Texas?" I said, "No." He said, "Well, Senator Johnson said you were and he was going to take you under his. . . ." I said, "No, I'm not going." So I said, "My big difficulty is that I'm under a great deal of pressure. I'm just like one of these big PBY boats: when you cut the power off they go straight down; they don't glide." I said, "That's me economically. The day after tomorrow when I brew my last broadcast I'll drop right into an economic abyss and I can't let that happen."

He said, "You're right. Well, John, we won't let that happen. I understand your problem. Just take my word for it, and don't do anything." I said, "Well, I'm being replaced." He said, "Well, we'll see if we can't do something about that."

So I go down and I catch a taxi over to 57th Street between 1st and 2d Avenues--a big apartment house--to Lannie Ross' place, who was giving a farewell party for me. It had been scheduled for some weeks. And I go walking in and there's Carl Ward and Sam Slate, who are waiting for me. This was, I'd say, fifteen to twenty minutes after I'd left Stanton's office. And they said, "Johnny, could we see you before you go in to the party? Is there any way we could persuade you to stay on at CBS; not leave? As a matter of fact, we're ready to redraw a contract improving your share of commercials, *et cetera*, *et cetera*, *et cetera*." I said, "Yes, I think there's a very good chance that we could renegotiate a contract to that effect."

That night at home my agent called and said, "Johnny, I've got news for you. Jack Paar wants you to take over his show on CBS, the morning show. You'll have José Melez and Merv Griffin, Edie Adams; you could have quite a crew there to work with."

So about two days later I called the Senator and I said--no, the Senator had called me and said he wanted to know what they owed me because I had been going to Washington back and forth, and had accumulated about eighteen hundred dollars worth of expenses. And I'd taken people to dinner at Bobbitt's suggestion; to do us good. And the Senator says, "Well, let's get it all settled, Johnny. What do we owe you?" I said, "Well, Senator, I want to thank you for getting me this job." [He said,] "I don't even know what you're talking about. I have no idea what you could be talking about." I said, "Well, you don't owe me anything; if I've got another job making just as much money, obviously I haven't been damaged. Now there is a matter of our personal bill for these dinners and my trips backward and forward. I've sent Jesse Kellam a very carefully calculated account of that. I have everything on it but my--it comes to about eighteen hundred dollars--everything except a couple of hundred dollars that I sent to this man King [Green?] down in Waco, my lease; the place y'all leased for me. He said, "Well, what does he say? Won't he send that back?" I said, "He said he would do the Christian thing about it." "Oh, hell, I know that Baptist son of a bitch. Forget it. Just write that whole thing off, whatever it comes to." We did and the matter was settled. And that was the end of that.

G: Why do you think he--?

F: Shortly thereafter Johnson had a heart attack. I sent him my condolences and best wishes and all. And I never knew; Cactus never knew, no one ever knew what had happened until 1977, twenty-odd years later. I got my FBI report, my FBI file. And going through it--I don't know whether you ever saw one or not, but it's a hodgepodge of just a lot of trash, I mean gossip and stuff that nameless persons told them, and unconfirmed rumors

and opinions and that sort of thing. Then I noticed there in April 1955 there was a page that said George Reedy--well, it wasn't George Reedy, it was blacked out--called the Director this morning saying that Senator Johnson was employing John Henry Faulk in a private capacity and wanted to have any adverse information on him that we had in our files. "Shall I comply?" And Hoover said, "Yes, fully." That's in the damn thing. And *then* they *left* the goddamn memo that they sent to Johnson in it, and it would have scared [the] shit out of me, let alone Lyndon Johnson.

G: What did it say, in effect?

F: Oh, that I--my relationships to blacks; my relationships to communists; that I'd been active in the Communist Party. All the usual trash, most of which was false. That I was a protégé of an old, eccentric professor named J. Frank Dobie, and that he had inducted me into the Communist Party. And then a page or so later that I had inducted J. Frank Dobie into the Communist Party. [Laughter] Outrageous stuff, all of which was just trash; none of which was true, you see. Johnson wouldn't have dared to publicly challenge with it because to publicly challenge--even at the height of the McCarthy period--was to put yourself in the position of having to prove it. If I sued, then you have to prove this is true, and since it was false or since he didn't know that it was true--most of their informants were nameless, faceless. But that's what had happened to me.

G: At the time did he offer a different explanation than the one they initially used, that they were going to sell off their stations because of the fear of a lawsuit?

F: Never did. I hadn't thought of that before. But they never did.

(Interruption)

F: Let's see. That was 1955. In 1956 I got embroiled in this union fight against these blacklisters and from that evolved my lawsuit. It was very embarrassing in my lawsuit. Roy Cohn was the opposing attorney and Roy Cohn worked a deal where CBS turned over all my records to them. Completely illegal. Completely without any authorization. You know, you can subpoena records. You don't send the original records to anyone and just hope they send them all back. And in them was this account of CBS firing me, a series of memos that were sent up in 1955 from the legal department; they weren't meeting Johnson's specifications. He'd send back down there in about thirty minutes and, "Change this to so-and-so and so-and-so." It really was the most incriminating thing in the world but nobody knew who Johnson was in this damn thing, including Roy Cohn, thank God, because he was at that moment vice president of the United States, [in] 1962.

It was a shoddy thing to have done, I think an ill-advised way out of a dilemma.

End of Tape 2 of 2 and Interview I

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JOHN HENRY FAULK

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